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英語で教える英文学概論  
EFL コンテンツ・コース

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## A Survey of British Literature in English: Teaching EFL content courses

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英文学概要を英語のみで教えるにあたり、本校で用いた手法について説明する。日本の大学においてEAP (English for Academic Purposes: 学問上の目的のための英語)への感心が高まっているが、カリキュラムにコンテンツベースの講義を加えるには、相応の配慮と計画を要し、多くの要素を考慮する必要がある。本稿では、まず、コンテンツベースの大学レベルEFLコースに関する問題点について指摘する。次に、コース設計とオリジナル教材開発についての詳説をし、最後に、英語で講義を受けた学生の理解度測定結果で締めくくる。

The purpose of this report is to describe the methodology used to teach a Survey of British Literature course at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC). Before explaining the steps taken to design the course and create original materials for it, issues related to content-based university-level EFL courses will be introduced. There has been an increased interest in teaching English for Academic Purposes at Japanese universities; however, adding content-based courses to the curriculum requires care and planning. This report addresses a number of factors that need to be considered when delivering academic content to students in a foreign language. To conclude the report, survey results measuring student comprehension of the English lectures will be presented.

### Introduction

With more universities in Japan interested in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, it is more than reasonable to expect English literature courses to have the medium of instruction be in English. Nonetheless, a number of obstacles must be overcome if an all English British literature course is to be successful. Most university instructors would concur that the number of hours that university students read each week has decreased since their own university days; this number becomes even greater when reading in a foreign language is included. This trend may negatively impact teacher and student goals for courses in which reading is an essential component.

This paper describes the creation of a Survey of British Literature course taught at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture. Discovering ways to engage EFL students with complex literary, historical and cultural information in an era that has seen a declining reading rate was one of the first tasks presented to the creator of this fifteen-week lecture course. Finding an appropriate method to deliver content, review lecture material, and test comprehension were critical to the success of the course. After briefly

introducing some current thinking on English for Academic Purposes courses, the processes used to create this course will be highlighted. A presentation of data gathered from post-lecture surveys will conclude this report on SUAC's first all English Survey of British Literature Course.

### English for Academic Purposes

Defining the role of English language education at Japanese universities can be difficult. Many courses carry names that designate them as skills courses; therefore, the instruction practices are often focused on raising students' language levels to the point where they can function in a number of daily situations. While English and other language courses are often pushed to the periphery of the curriculum, most teachers weave content into their lessons; their coursework should certainly be classified as academic. However, in some cases, raising student levels beyond survival, i.e., developing the ability to function in academic situations, is required. Most educators would concur that all courses at university should be academic (Gunning, 2009); nonetheless, finding ways to convey content in English, without compromising the material, is a challenge. Teachers at the tertiary level in Ja-

pan would acknowledge that despite a minimum of six years of English language instruction prior to entering university, some Japanese students still require remediation in English to bring them up to the most basic levels of discourse.

Hammond reports on the issues related to supporting linguistically and culturally diverse students in the English literature classroom (2006). While an experienced educator would be trained in the methodology to deliver content, the next obstacle to be overcome is to find the appropriate materials for what needs to be done in class (Swales, 2009). It is against this backdrop that the Survey of British Literature course at SUAC was created.

### The Survey of British Literature Course

The goal of this course is to give students a greater understanding of the historical, cultural, and literary significance of British Literature. Because it is a survey course, a number of literary periods are introduced in order to give students a greater appreciation of the trajectory of language and literature. For a complete list of the literary works studied in the course, refer to **Appendix A**. The medium of instruction for this course is English. All materials for the course, including online content, worksheets, and reading materials are in English. This course was taught in the Spring 2009 semester. Enrollment data for students who responded to an online survey at the end of the semester showed that 70% of the students attending classes were sophomores; the

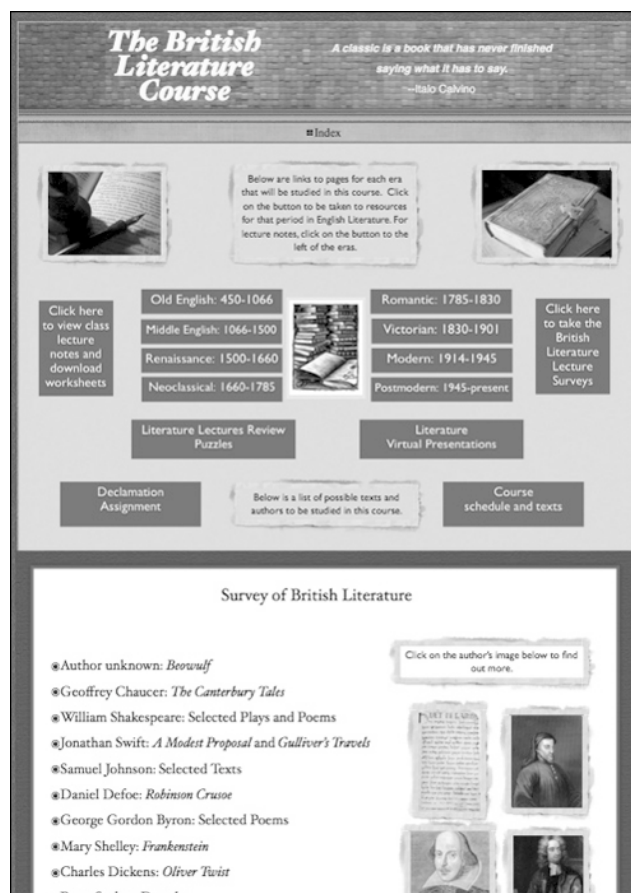


Figure 1. The website created for the course

remaining 30% were juniors. The class also had four auditors enrolled. Over 80% of the students on the class roster reported that they took the course because they wanted to study English more. This response suggests a high level of motivation among a significant majority of the learners and a willingness to receive content-based English instruction.

The materials for this course consisted of a course website: [www.suacletters.com](http://www.suacletters.com) (Figure 1), which housed all course content, instructions and guidelines, and the course syllabus. Transmission of the course subject matter consisted of three steps: preview, present, and review.

Each lesson attempted to maintain a balance between teacher-centered lectures and student collaboration. The steps for each lesson included:

- Warm up: peer check and instructor check of homework assignments
- Slide show 1: instructor transmission of content and guided note taking
- Peer check and instructor check of lecture comprehension
- Collaborative learning: peer work for reading or discussion
- Slide show 2: instructor transmission of content, free note taking
- Peer check and instructor check of lecture comprehension



Figure 2. Online previewing exercises

## Interactive Lecture Worksheets

**Geneva, Switzerland 1816**

Summer vacation with \_\_\_\_\_ and friends  
 Bad \_\_\_\_\_ that summer  
 Much time spent \_\_\_\_\_

**Geneva, Switzerland 1816**

\_\_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_\_ and telling ghost stories  
 Contest: try to write the best \_\_\_\_\_ story  
 The idea for \_\_\_\_\_ was born

**Geneva, Switzerland 1816**

Another guest: John Polidori, \_\_\_\_\_  
 Polidori's story was "The Vampyre"  
 The first English \_\_\_\_\_ story

### Peer check

**Note taking check**

Work with a partner and make sure that you didn't miss anything from the lecture. Use the phrases in the box to exchange information.

A: Did you catch everything?

B: I'm not sure.

A: I think I missed something on page \_\_\_\_\_.

B: I think it's \_\_\_\_\_.

A: How do you spell that \_\_\_\_\_?

B: \_\_\_\_\_.

### Slide show cloze

Figure 3. Students learn note-taking skills during the lecture



Figure 4. Review of lecture slides available on YouTube

- Wrap up: distribution of homework materials, Q&A

Each week, students were given a homework assignment that required them to view a specific page on the course website (**Figure 2**) to set a context for the following week's lesson, activate schemata, and learn biographical data about the author to be presented in the lecture. Students also read a short passage or summary of the text that would be the focus of the lesson. Students had to complete a worksheet for homework each week. At the start of each lesson, students peer-checked their work while the instructor monitored them to verify completion of the assignment.

In-class activities consisted of a slide show lecture delivered using presentation software. Cloze worksheets (**Figure 3**) of the text of the lecture were distributed at the start of class. During the lecture, students followed along and filled in the blanks on the worksheet from information gleaned by listening to the instructor and viewing the slides. This activity allowed students to learn note-taking skills in a more structured way. After a peer-check and a plenary question and answer session, students worked in pairs, or in small groups discussing a featured text or working on an important literary passage or summary of a text. Following this hands-on textual work, students were shown a second slide show to reinforce content and expand on the theme of the week. The second slide show was not accompanied by worksheets; students were free to note down any pertinent details from the presentation. A number of key points were repeated in the second slide show to ensure retention of important content. By inserting a peer check at various stages of the lecture, student anxiety could be mitigated and student collaboration encouraged (Adamson, 2006). Following each lesson, lecture slide shows were uploaded to the popular video website YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) and made available for review (**Figure 4**) by accessing the course

website.

### Lecture Comprehension Survey Results

As discussed earlier, student comprehension during the lectures was a main concern when designing the course and accompanying materials. In order to measure the level of understanding in each lecture, a set of online surveys were created. The surveys were given to students as part of a homework assignment. The survey questions were updated to reflect the topic of the lectures; they were administered on week 5, week 9, and week 13 of the semester to measure post-lecture comprehension and retention of content. Students were not allowed to consult their notes when responding to the surveys. There were a total of 13 questions on each survey including rating, ranking, and free responses. For the purposes of this report, a discussion of the data will be limited to the question: "I was able to understand the \_\_\_\_\_ lecture." Results from surveys of all twelve lectures are shown in **Charts 1, 2, and 3**. There are a number of variables that could have influenced the level of comprehension reported on the surveys, among these factors are: student level of interest in the content, prior exposure to and familiarity with the topics, and the motivation and language ability of individual students. Nonetheless, the survey results show a higher level of comprehension and retention than was expected and, therefore, are encouraging to the instructor of this course.

Because this was a survey course, the material was presented in chronological order to trace the trajectory of the English language and British literature. Those familiar with the British Literature canon would agree that the early works are not light reading. Nonetheless, the data in **Chart 1** represents a high level of comprehension of the early lectures. Furthermore, in the free response sections, students were able to retain and reproduce certain key de-

tails that every student of literature should hold in his or her head. Coping with thousand-year old content is no mean task. Nonetheless, the free response sections on the surveys elicited excellent answers. Students described the provenance of *Beowulf*, the historical and religious issues raised in the *Canterbury Tales*; they also remembered the details of Shakespeare's life, and wrote about the influences on and political significance of *Robinson Crusoe*. As the course moved further into the modern period, student comprehension seemed to improve in some areas and with some topics. However, students did have some difficulty with the Romantic Poetry lecture and the lesson on Modernism. Such trouble with these dense topics was not unexpected; even some native speakers struggle with texts from these eras.

One of the factors that may have contributed to greater comprehension of the lectures was the assignment of graded readers in conjunction with lectures on particular works. In this course, students were required to read and report on three readers: *Gulliver's Travels*; *Oliver Twist*; and *1984*. By having students read these special books created for English lan-

guage students, it was hoped that students would 1) enjoy the story, 2) develop more proficiency in English, 3) model the same type of activities as those of native English speakers in English Literature courses, i.e., reading a canonical text and discussing it.

Results from the post-lecture surveys will be presented below. **Chart 1** shows survey questions related to the lectures on *Beowulf*, Chaucer, Shakespeare and Swift. **Chart 2** reports on the Defoe, Byron, Mary Shelley, and Dickens lectures. **Chart 3** displays student comprehension of the Stoker, Woolf, Golding and Orwell lectures. The question reported on is: "I understood the \_\_\_\_\_ lecture." Students were asked to indicate their agreement with this statement by checking a number along a five-point scale; 1 signified "strongly agree" and 5 signified "strongly disagree".

**Chart 1**, displaying data from the week 5 survey, shows that over 30% of students strongly agreed that they could understand the Jonathan Swift lecture. Almost 70% of the class agreed that they could understand the lecture on Swift and *Gulliver's Travels*. In general, student responses seem to lean more toward

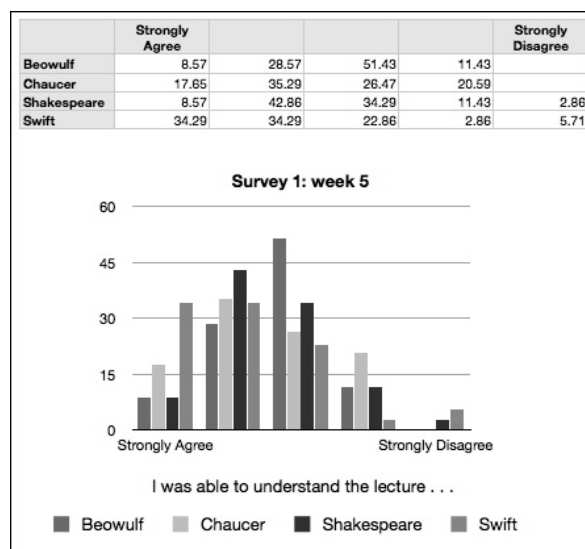


Chart 1. Comprehension of lectures 2-5



comprehension of the lectures than not.

**Chart 2**, displaying data from the week 9 survey, shows that almost 80% of the students agreed that they could understand the lecture on Dickens and *Oliver Twist*. Overall, a majority of the students reported favorably on their level of understanding of all subjects in this set of lectures.

**Chart 3**, displaying data from the week 13 survey, shows that almost 60% of the students agreed that they could understand the lecture on George Orwell and *1984*. While comprehension reporting appears to be lower than that of the other two surveys, these results are encouraging considering the heavy political and historical content in *1984*. Once again, a significant number of responses seem to be

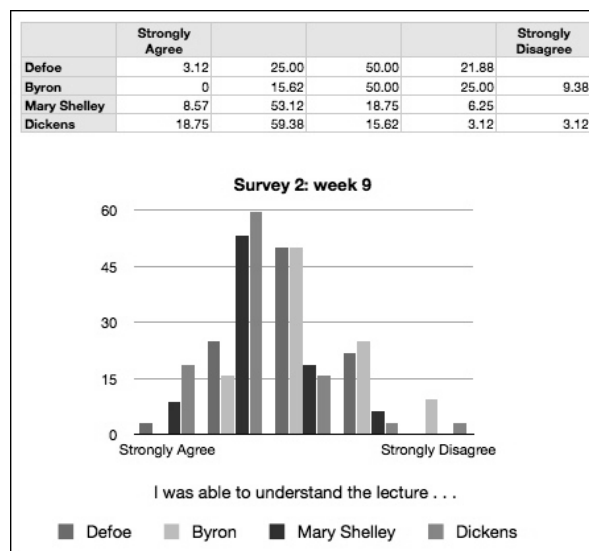


Chart 2. Comprehension of lectures 6-9

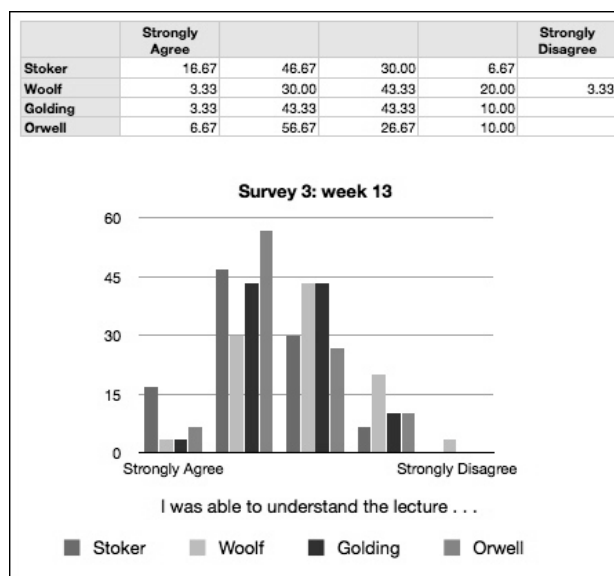


Chart 3. Comprehension of lectures 10-13

grouped to indicate understanding.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, while space limitations prevent a deeper analysis of the course survey data, a preliminary examination of results appears to be promising. The Survey of British Literature Course incorporated the latest technology to deliver course materials and lectures; furthermore, it enlisted EFL teaching practices to address the needs of students. The ingredients used to create this original course include research from scholars in the fields of EAP and ESP, the application of Web 2.0 technologies, English language teaching methodology, and an instructor with a background in, and a passion for English literature. Three different types of surveys were conducted on students taking this course. Two of the surveys were instructor-initiated and sought to gather information from students about their learning experience; the third survey was the official, university-sponsored survey given to gather administrative data related to the course. Across the board, students reported that their understanding of British literature increased and that they had a fair level of comprehension during the all-English lectures. Furthermore, students commented that they enjoyed the learning experience. Improved understanding of the subject matter, a high level of comprehension during delivery of the content, and enjoyment of the learning process are, indeed, outcomes sought by all teachers. A follow-up study and more detailed data analysis is required to continue to improve upon ways to best deliver materials related to teaching British literature to English as a foreign language students in the medium of English. Nonetheless, the pro-

cess of creating the course and implementing the materials was a tremendous learning experience for the instructor; it is hoped that the students had a positive educational experience with this English lecture course on British literature.

### Appendix A

#### *List of works introduced in the course*

*Beowulf*  
*The Canterbury Tales*  
*Henry V*  
*A Modest Proposal* and *Gulliver's Travels*  
 Selected Romantic Poems  
*Robinson Crusoe*  
*Frankenstein*  
*Dracula*  
*Oliver Twist*  
*Mrs. Dalloway*  
*The Lord of the Flies*  
*Animal Farm* and *1984*

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